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So here's an embarrassing little secret. Before aLBoP was even a dream in Calise's head, before we'd studied cognition much at all, we were exhilarated by the idea of the fifth layer of intelligence. We'd seen what it could do, the effects it had on everyone's lives constantly, and the sheer opportunities offered by controlling the Fifth Gear knowingly. And so, naturally, we tried to help other people use it. Yeah...that didn't work out so well.

Like the last section explained, each layer of intelligence can be accessed only via the layer immediately above it. In order to wield the awesome power of the Fifth Gear, a person first has to develop and polish their Fourth Gear. A healthy Fourth Gear naturally opens the way to the Fifth, while clogged higher gears make the Fifth Gear utterly inaccessible. But we didn't used to know that, and so we eagerly tried to share explanations (Second Gear knowledge) about how the Fifth Gear works, without helping people develop their Fourth or even Third Gear first. And then we were puzzled when people kept getting confused about it. Some people simply misunderstood, others got weird in an angry way, and still others got really weird in an overenthusiastic, back-away-slowly, ego-trip way. To make a long and very interesting story short, we learned the hard way how not to help people turn their Fifth Gear.

And then there was aLBoP, a happy, exciting platform where we could help people with their Fourth Gear. In private, we called it a perfect onramp to prepare cool, healthy people to access all the possibilities of the Fifth Gear. From day one, Calise and I were cackling deviously, longing for the day when we'd unveil our nefarious scheme. Of course, helping people understand and use the power of their own cognition is awesome as it is, but remember, each deeper gear is only bigger and more wide-reaching than the last.

Everything on aLBoP Phase 1 is geared to help you get healthier, stronger, and happier in your Fourth Gear, which should help you improve all the gears above that, without you even knowing it. Intelligence and its layers are natural things, and they work without us calling them "gears" or even knowing that they're there. And so Calise and I lay in wait for more than two years, like ninjas, until aLBoP Phase 1 had sufficiently laid its Fourth Gear groundwork. And now, finally, we get to write about the Fifth Gear again.

Fifth Gear ILs – Life Levels

There is of course a Sixth Gear too, a fundamentally final gear at the root of all of them, but we're not gonna be going there for a while. The Fifth Gear has to come first, anyway! This Fifth Gear gets down to some of the basic elements of intelligence, and while its workings are really pretty simple, its effects and applications are far beyond anything offered by all the higher gears.

The essence of the Fifth Gear is the pursuit of happiness, but happiness isn't always the best word for it. All intelligent beings, whether human, animal, or even AI, pursue things that they think will satisfy their desires, whatever those desires may be. This fulfillment of desires is a thing that we don't really have a good word for; sometimes it takes the form of

satisfaction, or success, or security or insight or whatever, so “happiness” seems like a good, general term for that overall completeness. All intelligent things pursue some version of success. This, at its simplest, is the Fifth Gear: that intelligent things desire stuff.

But which stuff? Now we go back to Intelligence Levels, and merge them with our layered gears. Remember, IL 1 is recognition, intelligence ruled by triggers without any overriding desire above those triggers; IL 2 is mimicry, creative intelligence applying things in new ways in pursuit of an overriding objective; IL 3 is competence, inventive intelligence coming up with entirely new things within the limits of its own desires; and IL 4 is discovery, an open and daring intelligence that overflows into all specializations at once. And there’s more after that, but these are the ones we’re focusing on for now.

Merging these ILs with the layered gears, we find that as each gear turns, it ends up evolving through the ILs independently of every other gear. For example, a person may be very IL 4 in their Second Gear, while being only IL 2 in their Fourth, and IL 1 in their Fifth. Or any other combination. People who focus more on the smaller, more obvious gears tend to have low, neglected ILs in their more powerful deep gears, even if they’re brilliant in knowledge or skills, habits or abilities. But what does it mean to be IL 2 in your Third Gear, or IL 4 in your First? That’s a very cool topic to explore in depth throughout Phase 2, but for the purposes of this intro, the only one we absolutely need to understand is how ILs apply to the Fifth Gear.

Each higher IL on the Fifth Gear represents a better, more effective, more fulfilling, and simply happier version of the general pursuit of happiness. The Fifth Gear is the root of desire itself, which in a way is one of the prime roots of intelligence at all. Each IL on the Fifth Gear denotes an entirely different quantum of what it means to desire. Rudimentary intelligences like AIs, for example, “desire” in such a basic way that we might hesitate to even call it that. And as our Fifth Gear IL increases, the very nature of wanting anything transforms, quantum by quantum. Our definition of happiness itself, success and satisfaction and everything like it, entirely changes as our Fifth Gear turns. Higher ILs of the Fifth Gear make every endeavor more likely to succeed, more likely to last, and are just plain happier than lower ILs.

This has the effect of making every thought, every action, every insight and of course every desire more effective on all the higher gears. A person with a healthier Fifth Gear will have a higher Fifth Gear IL, which will naturally cause their Fourth Gear cognition to grow healthier and higher in IL, and so on up through the gears all the way to the First. Because the Fifth Gear has such a sweeping, transformative, and immensely powerful effect on every corner of life, in 2009 we started calling Fifth Gear ILs “Life Levels” for short.

Home, Target, and Fallback

In the next section, we’re going to go into detail about each Fifth Gear IL – each Life Level – from Life Level 0 through Life Level 4. But before we get into all that exciting detail, we have to cover a little more about how Life Levels work.

Each person has a “Home” Life Level; this is the pursuit of happiness with which they’re most familiar. For example, if my Home Life Level is 3, then all my definitions of success, happiness, security, peace, and all that, will reflect the IL 3 quantum of competence. In my mind, Life Level 3 (or LL 3) will just make sense, and I may assume that it’s just “human nature,” the fundamental desire that drives everything we do and want.

If you ask someone what human nature is, you might get a variety of answers. Some might say it’s the desire to reproduce, while others might say it’s the desire for pleasure and power, and others might portray it as a kind of herd mentality. Well those are three very different, and in many cases contradictory, versions of human nature, of the deepest drive that motivates everything else. And in fact those three answers, sex, power, and the herd, are very basic reflections of Life Levels 0, 1, and 2 respectively.

When a person’s Home Life Level is LL 1, then human nature itself for them is simply different from the human nature of someone at LL 0, or someone else at LL 4. The very meaning of desire itself is different. This affects our approaches to every goal, every success and failure, every hope and ambition and every single little tiniest thing. Our Home Life Level is the kind of human nature that we’re most used to.

So when people sometimes declare that human nature never changes, Calise and I often laugh a little, because in a way they’re correct. In every era, in every culture in every part of the world, LL 2 people always show the same human nature as all other LL 2 people. They always have the same strengths, weaknesses, tendencies and desires, whether in ancient Mesopotamia or in modern Tokyo. LL 2 is always LL 2.

And yet in another way, the assertion that human nature never changes could not be more mistaken, because in any given neighborhood, you’ll find such a diversity of Life Levels! The deepest human nature of some neighbors will be just different from that of others. Naturally this can lead to misunderstandings, as all LL 1 people assume that everyone else is LL 1 as well, while LL 4 people do the same. Human nature never changes in the sense that the quanta of Fifth Gear ILs are eternal

constants in nature, but each human's nature is marvelously varied throughout human society.

And both individuals and cultures can, of course, change their Life Level as their Fifth Gear turns, or becomes clogged. It's fascinating to see how the average Life Level in any culture may be different from the average LL in another culture, and perhaps even more intriguing to see how the average LL of the same culture will rise or fall over time. Every time any culture has had a revolution, a collapse, a major war, or any other large and catastrophic change, it's seemed to be a result of a change in the average Life Level of that culture. Prosperous, stable cultures have always tended to gravitate more toward LL 4, while decadent cultures on the verge of calamity consistently swing toward LL 2. And when the average Life Level of a culture becomes LL 1 or below, utter chaos is quick to follow.

And the same is true of individuals. Happier, stronger, more successful people always seem to be more LL 4, while bitter, conniving, fearful people whose lives collapse tend to be LL 2 or less, regardless of how impressive their higher gears may be.

Yet every time we refer to someone as being a "Life Level 4 person" or a "Life Level 0 person," we're referring to their Home LL, the Life Level that describes their personal human nature. An LL 2 person will pursue happiness, desires, and existence itself in an LL 2 way...most of the time. But not always. Sometimes, they'll have an especially good day, and they'll just be feeling so good and so much like themselves. On those days, their very definition of desire may actually change temporarily, and they'll reach up into LL 3! On those days, they may seem like a wholly different person, because in a way, they are. Their actual human nature has *changed.* But only temporarily. Soon enough, they'll lose this happy high, and they'll find themselves back at their home of LL 2.

Or on other days, perhaps they'll just be feeling bitterer, more frustrated, and much less like their better self in any way. On these days, their Life Level will temporarily change in the opposite direction, and they'll fall back to being LL 1. This does not make them an LL 1 person; it simply means that at their worst, their actual nature can appear to change, and they'll seem like a completely different person in a bad way.

Every person is typically spread across three consecutive Life Levels: their Home, their Fallback one quantum below it, and their Target one quantum above. What's really interesting, though, is that nobody is ever, ever spread across more than three. The way that ILs build upon one another results in the fact that no IL can ever be skipped; the only way to get to IL 4 is by first passing through ILs 0-3, each in order, gradually. The same is true for Life Levels, which means that one cannot reach too far ahead of one's Home LL.

If my Home LL is 3, then I may be able to reach up into LL 4 at times, as I struggle to evolve upward into it. When a person can reach up into an LL sometimes, we say that they're Able in that Life Level. We're always Able in our Target LL. When a person naturally lives at a certain LL without really trying, we say they're Stable in that LL. We're always Stable in our Home LL. But because the quanta of ILs build upon each other, we must first become Stable in a Life Level before we can even become Able in the next one. This means that try as we might, we just cannot live at an LL two above our Home. First we must become fully Stable in our Target, so it becomes our new Home, and thereby grow LL by LL.

On the flip side, no one ever, ever falls back below their Fallback LL. This is really intriguing. For example, while a truly LL 3 person may fall back to LL 2 when their worse sides come out, they will never fall below that. Give them hardship, excruciating loss, even torture, and they will never fall below LL 2. This may be in part a result of the nature of desire; once you've fully mastered a quantum of what it means to desire, once you've fully mastered a Life Level, it seems contradictory to ever sink to a lesser type of desire. Because intelligent beings desire stuff, it contradicts the nature of intelligence to ever desire in a less effective manner than what you've mastered.

This is why we say that someone's Fallback Life Level is Mastered. To Master a Life Level means that your Fifth Gear of intelligence has fully developed every side of that quantum of desire. A Master of Life Level 2 has developed every aspect of what LL 2 means. Someone who has Mastered every aspect of a form of the pursuit of happiness would, by nature, never need to stoop to any lower form. Even under the greatest duress, intelligent beings still desire stuff, even if what they desire is just for the pain to stop, and they will desire that according to the best quantum of desire available to them. This means that while excruciating hardship can cause us to slip out of our Stable Home LL, we will never slip from an LL we've Mastered. That's what it means to have Mastered a quantum of desire.

And it appears that every time, you cannot become fully Stable in a Life Level without first fully Mastering the one before it. Each quantum is required before the next. Thus, each person tends to be spread across three LLs: their Home LL, which they're Stable at, and therefore live comfortably at most of the time; their Target LL, which they're Able at, and reach up into as they struggle for greater satisfaction and success; and their Fallback LL, which they've Mastered, and is the lowest form of happiness that they slip down to when all else fails.

This means that a LL 3 person is at Home and Stable in LL 3, which requires that they've Mastered every single side of LLs 0-2. And because LL 2 is the highest form of the pursuit of happiness that they've Mastered, it is the lowest form of desire

that they'll ever sink to. This makes LL 2 their Fallback. And because LL 4 is the highest quantum of desire that they can yet access from a Home of LL 3, LL 4 is their Target. Home of 3, Fallback of 2, Target of 4.

But what does it really mean to be LL 3? Or LL 4, or LL 0? What does it mean to apply the ILs to the Fifth Gear pursuit of success and desire? Now for the fun part! Now, let's dive into quick descriptions of each of the Life Levels, and see how they apply, how they affect everything, and how learning to intentionally increase our own Life Level can change everything we ever expected out of life.